

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4069

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY KINSHA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

USUN NEW YORK 876

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0627

LIMDIS NORFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SF, XA

SUBJECT: VORSTER MEETS WITH LEADERS OF UNNAMED AFRICAN STATES

REF: A) CAPE TOWN 0577; B) ABIDJAN 7723; C) CAPE TOWN 0597

1. ON MORNING OF OCTOBER 11, AMBASSADOR WAS ASKED BY FONSEC FOURIE TO MEET WITH PRIME MINISTER THAT AFTERNOON. DURING MEETING, VORSTER TOLD AMBASSADOR HE WANTED TO INFORM HIM OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING DISCUSSIONS HE HAD HAD WITH LEADERS OF CERTAIN AFRICAN STATES (SEE REFTTEL A).

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2. AS A RESULT OF THESE TALKS, VORSTER SAID, IT WAS VERY LIKELY

THAT WITHIN THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS THE AFRICAN STATES CONCERNED WOULD ANNOUNCE CHANGES IN THEIR POSITION WITH RESPECT TO SOUTH AFRICA. VORSTER SAW TWO REASONS BEHIND THIS ATTITUDE. FIRST, THE AFRICAN LEADERS WERE SURPRISED AND PLEASED THAT SAG HAD ACTED WITH RESTRAINT TOWARD THE CHANGES IN MOZAMBIQUE AND ANGOLA, AND THAT IT HAD ACCEPTED FRELIMO'S ASCENDENCY IN MOZAMBIQUE. SECOND, THE AFRICANS ARE DEEPLY ANGERED AND CHAGRINED THAT, HAVING BROKEN RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, THEY HAVE BEEN TREATED CALLOUSLY BY THE ARABS, AND THROUGH THEM THE SOVIETS. FACED WITH THE DAMAGE THAT THEIR COUNTRIES' ECONOMIES ARE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF ENERGY CRISIS, AND IN VIEW OF FAILURE OF ARABS TO RESPOND TO THEIR NEEDS, THESE AFRICAN LEADERS ARE INTERESTED IN WHAT HELP SA MAY BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM.

3. VORSTER WOULD NOT REVEAL WHICH AFRICANS HE HAD TALKED TO, BUT WHEN IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION NAMES OF SENGHOR AND HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY WERE MENTIONED, HE GRINNED AND SAID HE WOULD NEITHER CONFIRM NOR DENY HE HAD SEEN THEM. HE STRESSED NEED TO MAINTAIN ABSOLUTE SECRECY RE HIS TALKS. LATER HE IMPLIED SA WAS HAVING USEFUL CONTACTS WITH SEVERAL AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS. INTERESTINGLY, HE ASKED HOW USG REGARDED MOBUTU SESE SEKO.

4. AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT THE AFRICANS WERE DEMANDING FROM SAG IN RETURN FOR MODIFYING THEIR POLICIES TOWARD SA. VORSTER SAID THERE NO SPECIFIC QUID PRO QUO. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT NAMIBIA HAD A LOW PRIORITY IN THE EYES OF THE AFRICAN LEADERS, BUT RHODESIA WAS HIGH ON THEIR LIST OF PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED. (ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY VORSTER ON RHODESIA IN SEPTEL.)

5. VORSTER SAID THE AFRICANS ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR NEEDS THAN

ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA'S INTERNAL SITUATION. SOUTH AFRICA COULD BE A SOURCE OF FOODSTUFFS FOR THEM AND, VORSTER SAID, SAG STANDS READY TO PROVIDE THEM WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. HE TOLD AMBASSADOR HE THOUGHT THE AFRICAN LEADERS UNDERSTOOD POLICY OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT--INCLUDING INDEPENDENCE FOR TRANSKEI--IN ITS LONG-TERM CONTEXT AND WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT IT AS AN ONGOING DEVELOPMENT.

6. VORSTER SAID THAT PREVIOUSLY HE HAD THOUGHT THE WAY TO WIN APPROVAL OF OUTSIDE WORLD WAS THROUGH IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH WEST. HOWEVER, HE HAD COME TO REALIZE THAT KEY TO MORE SUCCESSFUL FOREIGN

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RELATIONS FOR SA LAY IN IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH AFRICAN STATES. THIS WOULD REQUIRE A CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S EXTERNAL POLICIES, AND ONE REASON HE HAD CALLED GENERAL ELECTION EARLIER THIS YEAR WAS TO GET MANDATE FROM ELECTORATE WHICH WOULD ENABLE HIM TO CHANGE EXTERNAL AS WELL AS INTERNAL POLICIES. HE NOW FEELS THAT HE IN A STRONGER POSITION THAN ANY PREVIOUS SOUTH AFRICAN PRIME MINISTER. DESPITE OPPOSITION FROM "LUNATIC FRINGE" WITHIN HIS PARTY (SOME OF WHOM HE CONSIDERED DANGEROUS), HE WOULD CONTINUE TO DO WHAT WAS NECESSARY

TO IMPROVE EXTERNAL RELATIONS.

7. VORSTER SAID HE BELIEVED HE WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE MEETINGS OF THE KIND HE HAD JUST HAD, BUT HE DID NOT SAY WHEN, WHERE, AND WITH WHOM THEY WOULD BE HELD.

8. COMMENT: WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO SHARE VORSTER'S OPTIMISM ABOUT DRAMATIC CHANGE OF POLICY TOWARD SA BY CERTAIN AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS, AND IT IS EVEN MORE HARD TO ACCEPT THAT ANY SUCH CHANGE WOULD BE EXPRESSED PUBLICLY. ALTHOUGH WE ARE IN NO POSITION HERE TO JUDGE IMPACT THAT ECONOMIC EXIGENCIES MAY HAVE HAD ON THINKING OF MEN LIKE SENGHOR AND HOUPOUET-BOIGNY, IT WOULD BE MOMENTOUS STEP FOR ONE, TWO, OR A FEW AFRICAN LEADERS TO PUT THEMSELVES IN DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH MAJORITY OF OAU STATES ON HIGHLY EMOTIONAL POLITICAL ISSUE OF SOUTH AFRICA. EXTREME ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS FOR THE AFRICANS MIGHT DO IT, BUT IT SEEMS TO US THAT THERE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE SOME MAJOR MOVE BY SAG, E.G., WITHDRAWAL OF FORCES FROM RHODESIA. MOREOVER, IT WOULD SEEM THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE MUCH MORE VISIBLE EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE CHANGES IN RACE RELATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE THUS FAR.
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